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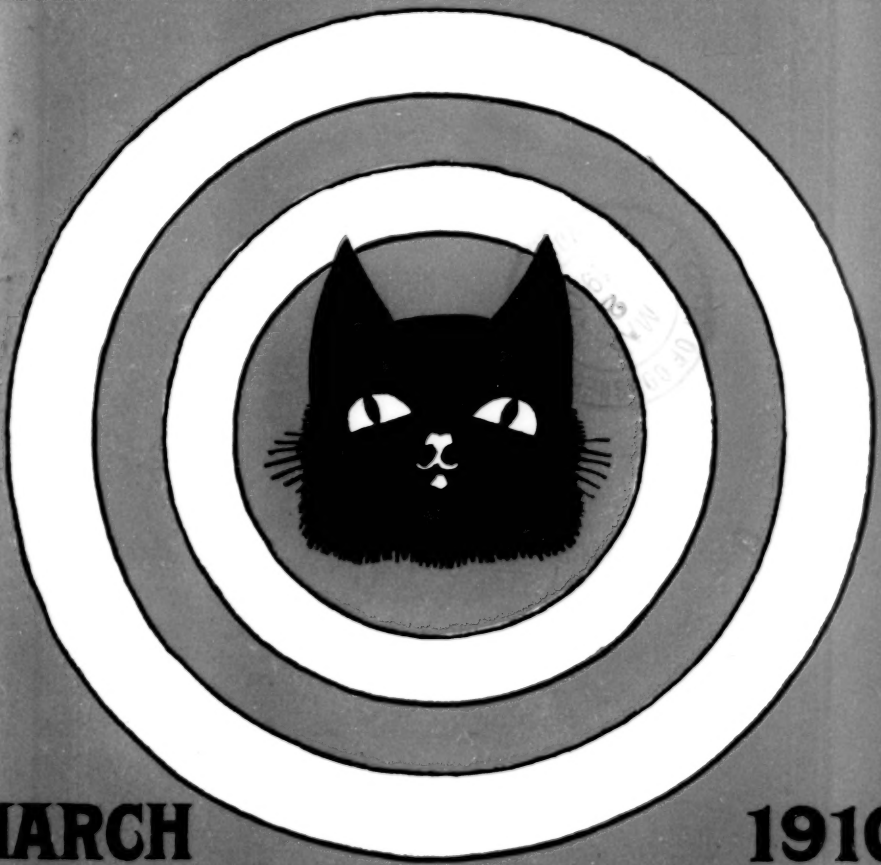
The Black Cat



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Ten Cents

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The Black Cat

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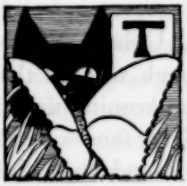
A Woman's Own.*

BY T. D. PENDLETON.



THE roses at the old King Place were in their wonted early-June perfection. The Martha Washington, the Baltimore Belle, and the Prairie Queen close together on the south side of the walk whence their blended fragrance challenged the exotics, Sofrano, Golden Gate, and Sombreuill. La France stood in the southwest corner alone. La France accepted no challenge. She was easily queen and she knew it — queen for all the summer except two weeks in mid-June when the great Hundred Leaf rose-tree flung abroad the sweets of Araby, spice and musk and ambergris, and a dozen others too subtly blended for analysis.

Hundred Leaf was showing vivid pink at the tips of her buds now, Sarah King saw as she came in from her ten-hour day at the schoolhouse. Sarah was strangely tired, and she sat down in the porch before going in to Grandma King's sharp-eyed inspection. Surely the front yard was a soothing prospect for weary eyes. The fences were irreproachable in fresh white paint, the graveled walks innocent of the tiniest spike of weed; and the three acres of ground were a veritable dream-garden of roses.

The roses at the old King Place were traditional. Nobody could remember when they had not been there. During June court,

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when the long windows of the courthouse were wide open, visiting lawyers were aware of something they could not analyze, a subtle something that brought unbidden pictures of the long-ago to them. Once when Hundred Leaf was in full bloom Judge Broadnax had unaccountably charged the jury favorably to the poor devil who, by all right of law, deserved state's prison.

People walking past the old King Place in the late twilight inhaled the delicious breath of the roses as a matter of course. To be sure they sometimes thought: "Sarah King's a good girl to look after her grandma's place as she does — not many girls would take such interest in flowers."

The girl who sat now in the porch was aware of this kindly approval, and it had been sweet, but she was twenty-one and it was losing its flavor. This duty of "keeping up" the old place in its traditional beauty had begun to weigh.

When she was sixteen Grandpa King died. Unhesitatingly Sarah put on the yoke. Grandpa King left enough to feed the two womenfolk and cover their nakedness, but the keeping up of the place would require money, ready money. The fences must be repaired, the graveled walks taken care of — and then the flowers, the roses. Three acres of flower-adorned ground was a good deal for a sixteen-year-old girl to contemplate, but Sarah did not once falter. The first of her meagre school money went to fertilize the roses. Grandma King patted the girl's head: "You're a good child, Sarah. We'll pull together and mebbe after all we can keep up the place — and the roses, yore Grandpa's roses."

The wistful look in the old eyes made Sarah's own fill, but she threw back her strong young shoulders and said:

"I will always keep up the place — and the roses. I know I can do it."

Sarah did do it. But she wore one gray suit three years, and sturdy, sensible boots built to stand wear. At eighteen she gave up the May Day picnic because she would not take the requisite dollar from the hoard for the purchase of the Fall roses.

"Yore Grandpa always bought every new rose that came out in the catalogues," said Grandma King wistfully whenever the

mail brought one of the seductive, gorgeously colored "Annual Announcements."

The purchase of new roses alone was no small thing to a fifteen-dollar salary which was no salary at all for three months of the year. Then there was the money paid to Jim Carithers for labor — the big roses required a man's handling — and the fertilizer, and the fresh paint. There was nothing left for personal adornment.

After the picnic when she was eighteen Sarah had been dropped from the list of possible participants in any planned gaiety. "Sarah can't go," those in charge said. "Sarah has her school and her reading — and her roses. Sarah's such a dutiful girl."

Yes, praise had been sweet. But the years had gone by and Sarah was twenty-one, and it was not enough. This particular June evening as she sat in the porch the approval of her fellows seemed to Sarah King peculiarly insufficient — and all because of a thing so trivial that her cheeks burned with shame in the remembrance of it. Sarah had walked home behind John Dexter and the new minister's niece who was at the parsonage for the summer. Sarah was used to seeing John walk with the little blonde, smiling down at her as they walked; but to-day Sarah had been close behind the couple, close enough to note the subtle daintiness of the girl's apparel, to hear the unmistakable silken whisper of the skirts. At the crossing the lifted blue serge skirt had left visible a margin of blue silk shot with white. A sudden childish pang had come to Sarah, a pang whose hurt she nursed now in the scented twilight of the porch.

She looked across the open square where an irregular dark blur marked the ancient rambling house in which John Dexter lived alone with two family servants. "Uncle Ephraim" had not lighted the hall lamp yet. Things were not very well ordered at John's home. His roses tumbled over the gallery rail in sweet confusion; weeds peeped fearlessly between the crumbling bricks of his pavements. Nobody could say that John "kept up" the place he had inherited. John went through his days serenely, nearly always with a laugh on his mouth, always with a laugh in his eyes — a laugh that laughed at and with things. Was it the tantalizing laugh in the eyes or was it the big muscular frame?

Sarah did not know. But she sat yet longer in the porch before she dared Grandma King's eyes.

Jimmy Kerr came up the front walk calling:

"Sarah, I brought your mail from the postoffice, and Ma says please send her a bunch of roses to carry to Mis' Level. Miss Level's real sick."

Glad of action, Sarah took the shears from their nail in the porch and cut a peck of the fragrant annuals. Afterward she looked at the manila envelope Jimmy had handed her.

"Another flower catalogue!" she said in strange petulance, and went into the house and threw the envelope on the living-room table.

But after the supper dishes had been put away and she was again in the glow of the living-room lamp, Sarah opened the catalogue dutifully. It was not a flower catalogue at all, but one of the monster catch-dollars sent out by a Chicago dry-goods house. Sarah's mouth drooped pathetically. Why should any one send her such a catalogue? Her eyes were compelled by a color-plate. She had been mistaken after all: it was a flower catalogue — No. But the pictured wares were strangely flowerlike in their exquisite color. What were they? Sarah looked more closely at the page. The flowerlike garments were silk blouses so folded that the overlapping frills indeed simulated many-petalled roses. They were green, crimson, mauve, blue, pink — the pink was prettiest. It was like one of Hundred Leaf's blossoms. Grandma King dozed peacefully in her chair. Still Sarah held the catalogue open at the same page. . . . Could she? . . . Jim Carithers would not be able to do the summer work on the rose-garden now anyhow. He was at work on a job over at Beda which would keep him a month. . . . She had the twelve dollars she would have paid Jim for the work if he had been able to do it. . . . Dared she? . . . With cheeks scarlet for shame Sarah drew the writing-pad close and dipped her pen in the ink.

Grandma King awoke just as Sarah was finishing her letter. "What's that you're orderin', Sarah? Roses or bulbs?"

The naked truth would hurt. Sarah could not explain what she did not herself understand. She took the easiest way: "A rose."

"What color, child?"

"Pink," lied Sarah miserably, and resolved not to send her letter with the foolish order.

But the naughty wind of destiny that blew to Sarah King the dry-goods catalogue was at work early the next morning when it sent Jimmy for more roses "for Mis' Johnson's daughter's weddin' bokay." As Sarah clipped the Marechal Niels and Microphylias the dreary prospect of the procession of the years awoke in her unwonted self-pity.

"You'll never need to bloom for me, except for my coffin," she told the white rose-tree in a voice she knew was maudlin but couldn't suppress — "and even then there will be nobody to put you on."

Jimmy took the flowers, but came back to the porch to say:

"Got anything for the postoffice? I'm goin' right past there?"

Sarah asked Jimmy to wait a minute. Then she walked deliberately to the living-room and took from her portfolio the letter she had written the night before. She enclosed two bills from her purse and gave Jimmy directions for registering the letter. As she hurried to the schoolhouse she tried to justify herself:

"I am going to live out my life in the same old way. Nothing to look forward to but white roses on my coffin — at least there'll be nobody to put them on." She was growing mixed in her logic and her eyes were misty with another access of self-pity when she finished: "But at any rate I will have the pleasure of wearing one garment in accord with my taste before I die."

Meanwhile Jimmy had shifted the big bunch of roses so that he might more carefully examine the superscription of the letter in which he had with his own eyes seen Sarah King put two five-dollar bills.

"Phew," he said, "Chicago. More flowers, I reckon. Seems like they'd got enough roses by this time. But it's new ones every spring and fall. They ain't never satisfied."

John Dexter had passed by on his leisurely way to his office while Sarah cut the roses for Mrs. Johnson's daughter's wedding-bouquet, but Sarah's back had been to the street. John rested his arms on the fence and watched Sarah with the tantalizing smile in his eyes. Sarah King was the prettiest girl he knew, and by long odds the finest. Strange how a girl could be as pretty as

Sarah and not know it. John was not sure that a pretty girl was not prettier when she did know it. He watched the round arms reaching for the topmost roses for a little, then went on his way saying to himself: "It's a pity Sarah doesn't know how pretty she is."

By Friday morning Sarah's twinge of conscience had become a downright ache that vanquished her childish self-pity. Grandma King's interest in the new four-year-old rose she was expecting was becoming torture, and worse, Sarah had to engage in the pettiest dissembling. Every time Jimmy came up the graveled walk with the mail she must hurry to intercept the package she looked for. What if Jimmy should bring it when she was absent? She dared not dwell on the hurt to gentle Grandma King.

When at dusk on Friday evening Sarah did receive from Jimmy's hands a flat package, she had already decided that she would never open it. She would keep it as a reminder of the wicked vanity of a woman old enough to be above such things. She ran upstairs and locked the box in her trunk.

After tea Sarah deliberately chose a lengthy passage in the Old Testament, one that had ever been a particular trial to her patience. But Grandma King's attention waned visibly toward the end, and she could scarcely wait a reverent interval before saying:

"Sarah, I've forgot what kind of rose you ordered from Chicago. Seem's to me it's a long time coming."

Sarah went to bed in a chastened mood. She would wear her gray suit another year—what was the difference between three and four years? — She would sell her coral necklace to Mrs. Geltner and get the money to take the place of the ten dollars she had squandered. Then she would order the handsomest rose in the fall catalogue for Grandma King.

But even for the third time the wind of destiny played tricks with Sarah King when on Saturday afternoon, as she was starting down the graveled walk to set out on her way to the sewing-circle, it blew the irresistible spice and honey of Hundred Leaf directly in her face. Sarah stopped and picked a bunch for her belt and as she fastened the mass of bloom she was compelled by the charming effect of the pink against the gray of her girdle. She had never known before how beautiful were just the right

shades of pink and gray together. She went back to her chamber and unlocked her trunk.

Released from the narrow quarters of the box in which it had been mailed the shining frilled blouse expanded to its proper shape with a delicious rustle. Sarah locked the door, and when she emerged a few minutes later she was a glorified Sarah.

She was still a glorified Sarah who walked homewards about sundown and who even forgot the existence of a certain law-office on the square. She approached the low frame building without knowing that she did so. All her senses were engrossed with the delightful fitness and daintiness of her apparel, a feeling she had missed all of her life. John Dexter happened to come to the door of his office at that moment. He was not conscious of the pink daintiness. He did not see it. He saw only the face above it. He forgot to put his hat back on his head, and stood there looking at the faded red brick of the courthouse behind which the slender figure had disappeared. The tantalizing smile was gone from his eyes. Did Sarah King know she was pretty? He put on his hat and set his feet in the path through the courthouse square, for the first time in his life a man in a hurry.

Sarah did know. She had come into her own. Suddenly something had bloomed within her, something choked by duty and sacrifice to a summer instead of a springtime flowering. Give the word back to the French from whom we borrowed it. Banish it from the vocabulary of the "cultured." But the thing exists, potent, eternal. The feminine. It is a woman's own. And the fragrance of it may be as wholesomely sweet as is the perfume of the clove-pink by which she sends her wireless message to The Right Bee: "See how I have decked myself for you!"

With her arms around Grandma King's neck Sarah told her happiness:

"We are to be married in September, but we are going to stay right here with you and keep up the place and the roses just as they have always been."

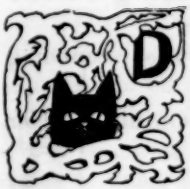
Grandma King's faded blue eyes didn't fill with tears. They smiled.

"Well, Child, I can't say I'm surprised greatly. Pretty girls

— as pretty as you — rarely go to their graves single. If you'll look in my bureau drawer, right-hand side at the back, you'll find a red box with the money in it to buy the fixin's you need. There's plenty to buy them nice, white silk stockin's and all. Brides have got to have white silk stockin's. I've been savin' the money ever since you were a baby. There, now, don't cry, dearie, when you're so soon to marry the man you've given your heart to. I'm glad you're goin' to keep up the old place — and the roses. Yore Grandpa 'll be glad, too. That reminds me. You'd better order some new roses right now, three-year-olds. We need another pink in the northeast corner to balance La France on the other side of the walk. There ain't anything prettier than a Hundred Leaf. I remember yore Grandpa set out one the year we married."

A Private Quarrel.*

BY WILLIAM TREZEVANT DAVANT.



DEVIL ANSE CANFIELD gazed quietly at the man before him. His thumb fumbled the hammer of a brown rifle, a nervous trick which had worn the steel smooth.

"So ye want work?" he drawled, presently.

The man to whom he spoke was clad in overalls. His smooth-shaven face was tanned darkly. His upper lip had the peculiar puffy effect which betrayed the fact that a mustache had been sacrificed.

"Yes, I do."

"Whur're ye from? Whut kinda work kin ye do?"

The stranger met the searching gray eyes for the first time.

"Stranger," he said, frankly, "to be square with you, I ain't going to tell you where I come from. I'll say this much: I ain't always worn these kind of clothes and a look at my hands will show you that I ain't a laboring man, although I'm willing to do anything that will pay my board and keep for a month or two."

The case was not unusual. The country is well suited to the needs of men who have come under the displeasure of the law. On one side of Tug River is West Virginia, on the other lies the state of Kentucky. Hills, valleys, valleys and more hills; the landscape presents a monotonous ruggedness which discourages pursuit. Once across the river, the fugitive is safe until the slow process of extradition is gone through with.

Anse fumbled the hammer of his rifle, always keeping the muzzle directed toward the other.

"I'll take ye, furriner," he pronounced, after giving him due consideration. "Whenever ull ye be ready to go to work?"

"I'm ready now."

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He picked up a bundle of clothes and prepared to follow his employer.

The old man wheeled like a cat.

"No ye don't!" he snarled, his eyes red with suspicion. "Ye go fust."

Without a word the younger obeyed. At a clearing Canfield halted him.

"Troy! Hey-o-o, Troy!" he shouted, his voice resounding in the typical mountaineer's call.

A tall lad appeared noiselessly behind them. On his shoulder was the inevitable rifle.

"Want me, Dad?"

"Fetch this man a crow-bar an' shovel. He's gointa grub th' pastur'."

When the implements came, he set the stranger to work in the gruelling afternoon sun, uprooting stumps in the clearing. During the operation he sat on the rail-fence, an embodification of sombre menace. With his head sunk into his bowed shoulders he was never at rest. His keen gray eyes under shaggy brows darted now this way, now that; his beaked nose seemed to sniff the air suspiciously, his curly brown beard, shot with white, failed to hide the nervous twitchings of a cruel mouth. And always he kept his rifle pointed in the direction of the worker.

At the mellow call of a horn, he slid to the ground and called his employee.

"Supper," he announced, laconically.

They filed to the house, the stranger in front. An elderly woman met them at the door.

"My new hand," the Devil said, by way of introduction. The woman murmured something and led the way into the kitchen.

Anse played the part of host with a hospitality bred in the bone of the mountaineer. He pressed fried chicken and squirrel and all the viands which constitute the highland menu upon his guest. But the stranger noticed the boy, Troy, sat in front of the stove with a rifle across his knees and never took his eyes from his face.

The meal finished, the host escorted the laborer into the liv-

ing room. A certain look of constraint seemed to leave him as he picked up his rifle and fumbled the hammer.

He caught his guest's eye and chuckled: "Somehow I don't never seem right unless I'm totin' ole Betsy."

"I reckon there are some pretty tough men in these hills," the other responded, looking with concern at his blistered palms.

"They's five thousan' dollars reward fer me in Kaintuck an' I hafter be keerful. I hain't afeard uh th' McBees. My men knows 'em all an' they hain't one uh 'em could cross Tug River alive. Whut I'm nervus about is these here smart, Jack deetectives. They hain't nothin' to hender 'em frum comin' to me, like ye done, fer a job, an' waitin' fer a chanst to capture me when I hain't on my guard."

"That's why you carry the rifle with you all the time," exclaimed the hired man, in sudden enlightenment.

The Devil brooded in protentous silence. The other busied himself pricking with his pocket-knife the water blisters caused by his strenuous afternoon.

"Hit's this away," Anse rumbled, suddenly, "I hain't never harmed a soul whut hain't fust harmed me. I wanta live in peace with my feller man, but things has happened, which they won't let me.

"Them McBees butchered my brother. He wuz my pal, my playmate. They filled him with lead an' cut twenty-five wounds in his body — all on account uh some pigs, which they wa'n't wuth a dollar.

"I hain't never harmed th' state uh Kaintuck. All I've did is to kill ev'ry man I c'n find whut helped kill my brother. I hain't hurt none uh them th' state sent after me, although they wuz meddlin' in a personal matter whut is jus' between th' McBees an' Canfiel's."

He got up and faced his listener.

"Whut ye got to do with hit, Bill Hardin? Whut bisness is hit uh yourn?" A vein of raillery ran through his next words. "But I fergot. Ye didn't come fer me, but jus' wanted a job. Hev ye got enough uh grubbin' stumps?"

The detective sat quietly in his chair, his eyes half-closed.

"Anse, you've caught me with the goods."

"I reckernized ye as soon as I seen ye. Shavin' off a mustache hain't much uh a dissguise, Bill."

"Well, Anse," Hardin arose and met his eyes fearlessly, "what you going to do about it?"

"Ye know whut I oughta do. But I don't want no trouble with th' state. Ye've et my grub, ye kin sleep in my house to-night. To-morrer I'll drive ye to th' station in time to ketch Number Four. But don't never come back out here, Bill."

"Is that a threat?"

"Take hit as a warnin', Bill. Ye're squar' an' ye've got nerve. I don't want nothin' to happen to ye in my country."

The detective yawned. "I think you said something about a bed," he suggested.

The feudist lighted a tallow-dip and pointed to the steep stairway. Hardin took the light out of his hand and started to climb upstairs.

"Wait a minute, Bill," the Devil called. "Less have ev'rything straight between us. We uns is awful light sleepers an' mighty nervus. Whenever we hear a soun' in th' night we shoot fust an' look afterwards. Gin ye walk in yer sleep ye'd better fassen th' door so's ye can't open it less'n ye're wide awake."

The next morning Anse presided at the breakfast table with his homely grace. Hardin ate a hearty meal, expressing his appreciation by the keenness of his appetite.

A gleam came into his eyes as he got in the buggy beside his host and noticed that the brown old rifle had been left behind.

The mountaineer was by nature a taciturn soul and the law officer was busy with his thoughts, therefore the drive was finished in silence.

As the train pulled in, Anse reached in his pocket.

"Bill," he drawled, a humorous light in his deep-set eyes, "th' Good Book says that th' laborer is worthy uh his hire"; with the words, he dropped a silver dollar in Hardin's blistered palm.

The detective reached back to put the coin in his pocket. His hand flashed up holding a revolver.

"I don't see any reason why you shouldn't take the trip with me," he remarked, cheerfully.

The old man shook his head gloomily. "Put hit back, Bill, I'm disappointed with ye. Ye'd oughta know me better. I don't trus' no man futher back than a fust cousin an' I expected this."

"Cut that out," Hardin snapped triumphantly. "Get aboard."

For answer the outlaw whistled shrilly. Half a dozen loafers on the platform were transformed into alert mountain men. They bounded toward the detective and surrounded him with leveled revolvers. Anse chuckled at the changed expression of Hardin's face and waved them away.

"Ye see, Bill, they're my people. They'd die fer me like I'd die fer 'em. Ye bin buttin' in on a private quar'l an' ye don't deserve to git away. Jump on yer train an' go back to Roanoke whar ye belong before I change my min'. *An' don't never come back!*"

The officer shrugged his shoulders and thrust his gun back in his pocket.

"Good by, Anse," he called from the platform of the last coach.

Devil Anse Canfield stood and watched the train disappear in the East. His thumb felt vainly for its wonted occupation; a look of fear sprang into his eyes.

"Troy, Tro-o-y!" he yelled, shrilly.

The boy ran to him.

"Whur's Betsy?"

The lad handed her to him. The feel of the cold steel reassured him. With a sigh of relief he turned to his buggy, his thumb twiddling the worn hammer as a dog licks his master's shoe.

"Come on, kid ; less go home," he drawled.

The Hall of Dreams.*

BY EDGAR S. NYE.

OST people stifle their dreams as they stifle their conscience. I don't. I give mine full sway. For to me

> Life is but a dream-paved way
> O'er which we wander to and fro
> From the Present unto Yesterday.

They take me beyond the narrow walls and confines of materialism out into the dim and distant realms of the Unknown. And in these journeys of fancy I come to understand much that is hidden to the average mortal. In this way I came to know of the approaching dissolution of John Winton, though he was three hundred miles away, almost as soon as he himself did.

I was sitting alone in my room, gazing into the open fire, when the message came to me. It was a night to sit and dream. The wind was howling over the housetops and whisking little flurries of sparks and ashes up the chimney, and in the semi-darkness of the room I was reeling off the films of memory and developing them by the aid of the softly glowing embers in the grate.

Suddenly there seemed a hitch somewhere in the mechanism. The pictures refused to come. I sank back further in my chair and closed my eyes, and when I opened them again a few minutes later, his face was looking down at me from the mirror over the mantel, — looking at me with the same expression it had held that day at the water hole near Caloocan, when the Insurrectos' bullets were kicking up the dirt and gravel about us in much the same manner a street-sweeping machine does the dust on Broadway.

We lay there for two hours amid a seething hailstorm of lead

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before our regiment charged and rescued us, and during those two hours we cemented a friendship such as rarely exists on this earth. We had been "bunkies" since we first joined the regiment, but something in the nearness of death that day brought our souls into unison for all time.

I shall never forget his look as he reached his hand across to me while the bullets were humming the thickest, and asked me if I had ever heard Seneca's definition of friendship.

I remember I shook my head, — it did not seem worth while to speak. And he seemed to come to that conclusion himself, for he lay still for several moments before he spoke again. But when he did his voice was as sweet and low and gentle as a woman's, and its calmness quieted the nervous tension that was sending the blotches of red dancing before my eyes.

"'The purpose of friendship is to have one dearer to me than myself, and for the saving of whose life I would gladly lay down my own, taking with me the consciousness that only the wise can be friends; others are mere companions,'" he quoted.

He was still a few moments, then he asked: "Would you do that for me, Jack?"

I looked across into his eyes, and I think it was more what I saw shining there than it was my moral courage that made me answer "Yes." And it was then that we made our pact. Winton wrote it out on the fly-leaf of his diary, using a piece of pampas grass for a pen and blood from the wound in his leg for ink. And we both signed it. The letters shine out before me now as I write. In his round, feminine hand they are appearing across the face of the page in brilliant contrast to the dull black of the ink marks.

Perhaps it would interest you to see them too. If so, here they are:

> "I promise to be a friend to you, — the kind of a friend that Seneca describes, — as long as what I now know as life or consciousness shall manifest itself either in this material body or its ethereal counterpart. And I promise that in case I pass through the change first, I will, if it be possible for me to do so, let you know what awaits you in the unknown Beyond."

I read it through when he had finished, and reached over and signed it. The movement brought my head above the hole I

had scraped out for my body, and a fusillade of bullets from the enemy shrieked over and about us. I must have ducked rather suddenly, for I saw the faint semblance of a smile on his lips when I next looked over at him.

"We won't get it here, either of us," he said. "We will go on for several years yet. I shall go first. But I will let you know. And I want you to come and be with me when I go. Not that I am afraid to pass out, but because I don't want to lose you. I want to take your soul on part of the journey with me; then it can come back to your body and you will know, when you pass on, how and where to find me, or I to find you."

As the echo of his words died in the corridors of my memory, the reflection in the mirror began to fade, as though moving swiftly away at the back of it, and as it dwindled into nothingness a bare forearm appeared in place of it. The forefinger was missing in the second joint as was Winton's. It beckoned to me for several seconds, and then it too faded away; and I sat upright in my chair, knowing as well as I did a few minutes later, when his telegram came, that he was about to pass on to the next plane of his evolution.

The telegram contained but two words, — "The Change" — but to me they meant volumes; and six hours later I was at his side.

I had never met any of the members of his family, — somehow he had always led me to believe he had no near relatives — but I knew the moment my eyes rested upon the girl who admitted me at the door that she was his sister. There was the same expression about her eyes and mouth that had always charmed me in him. She put out her hand and took mine with a masculine straightforwardness that immediately captivated me, and with a simple word of greeting led the way to his room.

On the way over on the train I had conjured up visions of the condition in which I would probably find him; but none of them were correct. I had never seen him look stronger or healthier in the seven years I had known him, and so I told him as I took his hand.

He smiled — the same smile I had learned to love and look for in the old days — and shook his head.

"It's the heart, Jack," he answered. "I've never fully recovered from that severe attack of rheumatism I had in the islands."

Then he glanced at his sister, and I saw her eyes turn to me with a mute appeal in their depths. He smiled faintly and beckoned her to come over beside him.

"Sit down here, dear," he murmured, softly. "I want to talk to Jack about you."

She came over and sat on the edge of the bed facing me, taking his hand in both of hers.

"Brother dear is very foolishly worrying about me and my future," she said with an attempt at cheerfulness; but I saw the tears welling up in her eyes even as she spoke. "He doesn't seem to realize that I am a grown woman and fully able to care and provide for myself. I hope, Mr. Weston, that you won't take anything that he says seriously. I — I can earn — "

Winton reached over and drew her down to him, and for several minutes he whispered in her ear. When she lifted her face it was scarlet, and she kept her eyes on the coverlet beside her.

"Jack," he said, turning to me: "I am going to will this little girl to you. She will be left entirely unprotected when I'm gone, and I want her to be able to find me when she comes to the other side. You are the only one that can guide her. Can I trust her to you?"

I felt my vocal cords congesting in my throat and rose to my feet and turned aside until I could control my emotions. There was something so intensely tragic in his voice that the tears came to my eyes in spite of my efforts to prevent them.

"By our friendship," I answered, huskily. "And the same friendship is hers, for all time."

He reached over to join our hands together, and I saw a spasm of agony cross his features.

She turned and caught him in her arms and laid him on the pillow.

"Quick!" she cried. "The little crystals in the box on the dresser! Break one in a towel and hold it to his nose."

I jumped to obey her bidding and held the amyl nitrite to his

nostrils; but he motioned me away and raised himself further up on his pillow.

"Don't!" he pleaded. "Don't give me any more of that stuff. It will only keep this pain-racked heart of mine going a little while longer, — and it's tired — awful tired."

He reached up and laid his hand caressingly on his sister's head.

"Dear little Rose," he murmured, softly, "move a little further up so that Jack can take my hand. That's it. I want him to hold me while I go. Jack, I want you to hold fast and go with me until I let you go. I won't take you too far, for you must come back and look out for Rose. And I shall be very happy, Jack, if you marry her. You need each other. I have saved her all these years for you, my friend. Even Seneca couldn't ask more of a friend, could he?"

He paused. His lips quivered and his eyes grew hazy. For several seconds he was silent, and his eyes sought first the face of his sister and then myself. Then they became fixed in a far away look, and he went on, his voice barely audible:

"The purpose of friendship is to have one dearer to me than myself, and for the saving of whose life I would gladly lay down my own — that only the wise can be friends — taking with me — with —. The bullets can't hit us, boy. Just lie low and let them shoot their heads off. The price of lead will be higher in Manila in the morning . . . Jack, — closer. Hug the ground tight. Hold me — hold me, — hold —"

His lips moved swiftly but no sound came forth. His lower jaw relaxed and sank down upon his neck. The girl beside him gave a little gasping sigh and slid down upon the bed with her head resting against his shoulder. The movement of his chest ceased and his eyes slowly closed. I reached over and pressed the lids down upon the eyeballs, but as soon as I released them they flew open again, and an expression that I knew must be a manifestation of consciousness came to them. I felt his pulse. It was wholly imperceptible and the reflex action was entirely gone. Still he looked at me with that steady, searching gaze I had so often seen him assume when he was in deep thought. Then his eyes closed, and I felt a slight tingling sensation

running up my hand and arm, and the clasp of his hand upon mine tightened. Gradually I felt a great peace and calmness stealing over me; waves of exhilarating vibrations swept over me from head to foot. I opened my eyes and met his. They were wide open again and staring straight past me toward the window. Something had come into the atmosphere of the room that made every fibre of my being tingle with ecstasy. Though I had always been mortally afraid of a dead body, I felt no fear then. I did not even feel the inclination to see if the girl beside me were dead or alive. All was peace and harmony; and over me crept a desire to remain perfectly still and enjoy it. . . .

I looked again, and saw a misty, grayish, fog-like substance oozing out from his left chest, which congealed into a pear-shaped formation about the size of a man's clenched hand. This object arose slowly and floated in a small circle above him. Then it was suddenly still, and a moment later disappeared into nothingness. All sense of material form then left me, and I felt myself in the ethers with a sensation of gradually and almost imperceptibly rising and falling until I became engulfed in complete subconsciousness. I had no sensation, no knowledge of time, place or conditions; still my subconscious mind was fully active and every detail of my past life and of people with whom I had come in contact passed before me as vividly and minutely as when they first found impress upon my memory.

Then the articles of furniture and the walls of the room lost their material formation, and I floated, without semblance of form, through beautiful gardens, where the fragrance of the luxuriant foliage, and the singing of gorgeously plumaged birds, complete in harmony of sound and color, wafted me on through boundless voids wherein there was no conception of time, or of space, or of form, or of color; and all was silence, complete, perfect, harmonious.

Gradually there came a consciousness that the ethers were again expressing light and color, and I saw about me numerous vapory somethings, the shape of the human body, but which could be seen through, and which could move through solid substances at will. As I gazed at them, my consciousness and vision became still more acute. I seemed to be hovering near the ceil-

ing of the room. Below me on the bed lay the inanimate forms of my friend and his sister, — and beside them, with my hand still clasped firmly in Winton's, was my own physical body, which was connected with me, seemingly, by a bright, silvery, web-like thread. Winton's wide-open, glassy eyes were staring straight up at the ceiling, and, following the direction of his gaze, I saw another vapory form floating beside me, which was likewise connected to his physical body by a similar cord.

Then I heard a voice, — it was his voice, I knew, though the tones were vibrant with a sweetness I had never before heard, — which said "Come." In an instant we were out of the room and floating along over the city as on a scud-cloud. I began to fear that I would fall, and soon the thought entered my mentality that I was sinking; but even as it did so, Winton placed one of his hands under my arm and said, "You will not fall unless you fear, — hold the thought that you are buoyant, and you will be so."

I did so, and found that I could rise or sink at will. After that we floated off through boundless voids wherein our forms assumed all the tints and colors of an electric fountain. After an indefinite period, — for I had no conception of time or space, — a change came over everything. We seemed to be in a new world, — a land of queer shapes. The vapory, human-like forms that we had previously encountered floated about us on all sides, but they no longer moved intelligently, and, looking closer, I saw that they had been discarded, or shed, by the spirit that had occupied them. And then, to my surprise, I found my own form leaving me, and we passed on, leaving it in the world of shells, but still connected with me by a silk-like cord, just as it, in turn, had been connected with my physical body.

We next entered a great room of sleeping forms lying at rest and peace. Occasionally one of the sleepers would slowly awaken, and his form or sheath would pass out of the room to the place of shells, while he would take on another and still more etherealized one. On such occasions numerous other forms, more ethereal than the sleepers, would hover about him, soothing and comforting him, and then melt away to some other plane, taking him with them.

Again the scene changed, and we found ourselves in a beautiful park. Here, evidently, were the awakened souls we had seen leave the large room, for they were all wandering aimlessly backward and forward, as though searching for their own particular place of habitation. Suddenly a form confronted us that was totally unlike any of those about us, and more beautiful than any I had yet seen.

"You have gone as far as you can go," it said, addressing Winton. "No Soul may travel beyond its spiritual boundaries."

"And I, too?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. "You have reached that part of the 'other life' which will be yours when you part with your body, unless you develop still more, and thus pass into a higher grade."

"So there are higher planes yet?" I queried.

"Yes; plane after plane — the splendor of which even I cannot conceive. An infinity of infinities of planes are before us, and then *'The Absolute.'*"

"And what are we — what am I — among all this inconceivable greatness?" cried Winton.

"You are the most precious thing in the universe — a living Soul," replied our informant. "You are a part of it all, and are eternal. Without you nothing could stand, for you are of *The Absolute.*"

He stopped for an instant in a listening attitude.

"Some one you have left and love is calling you," he said, turning to Winton. And then, I too, heard, as a dim echo, the low, vibrant tones of a familiar voice.

Winton's features lost their expression of calmness and repose, and he turned to me with a gesture of his old impetuousness.

"Rose needs you," he cried. "Go back to her and comfort her. Tell her how infinitely beautiful and harmonious it is here, — that I am happy, and that I shall wait here until she and you come. She is calling again. Go back to her, and don't forget our friendship."

As he ceased speaking he floated out and away from me, down one of the numerous winding paths of the garden. I tried to follow him, but I seemed to have lost all power of locomotion. A great dread of returning to my former state came to me, and

I turned to the beautiful form that still retained its place beside me.

"Must I go?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, "certainly! No Soul can pass on until it has passed through every stage of its evolution, and fulfilled its duties to its fellow beings. Would you leave that poor, tortured soul to cry out her grief alone, when you can comfort and sustain her?"

And then I heard acutely a low wail that seemed to come from some one at my side; instantly everything became utter darkness. There was a whizzing, whirling noise, like the passing of a rapidly moving body through the air, and I opened my eyes on the grief-stricken, tear-stained face of Winton's sister.

I gently withdrew my hand from his lifeless grasp. "Come, — I will give you his message," I said, leading her gently from the room. And . . .

"Leave the rest to their imagination," she has just whispered over my shoulder. And as this is really her story, — I will.

The Man with the Stick.*

BY CLARENCE L. HAY.

MR. FREDERICK FELTON, known to the plain clothes force of Mulberry Street as "Chicago Fred," leaned against the polished bar of the Bijou Café and rested his chin on the knob of a fat cane. Mr. Felton was studying character. The eyes peering through the half-closed lids missed few of the happenings within the room.

A stout man slouched carelessly by, brushing roughly against Felton as he passed.

"Two suckers from Pittsburgh down the mahogany," he whispered. "The two in the zebra rigging."

Mr. Felton gave no immediate indication that he had heard. He did not change his position, and he continued to gaze listlessly at the talking groups. The fat man lurched down the room, and seating himself at an empty table, ordered a cocktail.

Presently the man with the cane stirred himself. He stood upright, picked up his gloves and sauntered in the direction taken by the man who had given him the information. But the deep-sunken eyes were now extremely watchful. Mr. Felton scented game.

Half way down the room, two overdressed young men were disputing loudly. Felton halted within a yard of them and busied himself in lighting a cigar. The occupation gave him an opportunity to listen to the dispute.

"It was Jack Hickey played that year," cried the eldest of the two. "He was — "

"You're wrong! It was Murphy," interrupted the other. "I'm willing to wager. I'll bet — "

"Chicago Fred," holding a lighted match in his fingers,

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leaned slightly forward. "At Pittsburgh?" he queried. "Pardon me, I overheard your argument."

The two young men turned. "It was at Pittsburgh," answered the eldest. "Last year when the 'Tigers' played —"

"Then you are right," murmured Mr. Felton. "It was Jack Hickey. I know him well."

The fat man leisurely sipping his cocktail, eyed the three stealthily. The "butting in" act performed by "Chicago Fred" interested him greatly, and he breathed a compliment into his glass as he noted how successfully his pal had performed the trick.

And Mr. Felton deserved a compliment. He backed his assertion concerning Hickey with such a mass of detail that the younger man acknowledged that he was in error, and as a proof that his acknowledgment was sincere, he invited the arbitrator to drink with himself and his companion.

Felton accepted, but when the drinks had been served, he remembered that he was suffering from a sprained ankle, and using the injured limb as an excuse for preferring a sitting position, he adroitly steered his two companions to the table where the fat man was sitting.

That person shook himself out of an apparent slumber, and, wonderful to relate, found after listening to a story that Mr. Felton had related to the two young men, that he knew one of the principal characters. He seemed childishly overjoyed at making this discovery, and he insisted on the three joining him in drinking the health of the absent one. Mr. Felton and the two young men laughingly consented, and the conversation grew louder.

After some fifteen minutes had passed, "Chicago Fred" thought of an appointment, and with evident reluctance he took leave of the three and hurried away, leaving the fat man and the other two in the midst of a hot dispute over baseball. The fat man as a conversationalist ranked high, and he cemented the newly formed friendship with every word he uttered. He proved himself a baseball authority of the first order, and the other two were apparently delighted with his freely delivered judgments and speculations.

In a lull in the conversation some few minutes after Felton's departure, the fat man discovered that "Chicago Fred" had forgotten his walking stick, and he laughed heartily as he picked the cane up from the floor and exhibited it to the two others.

"It's only a cheap pole," he gurgled. "It's a fifty cent — "

He stopped suddenly and a look of surprise spread over his fat face. He had, while twirling the stick around in his fingers, accidentally unscrewed the knob on the top, and disclosed a little receptacle containing a ten-dollar gold piece.

"Gee!" he gasped. "He keeps his bank here!"

The two young men examined the stick with evident curiosity, while the fat man showed much excitement over the discovery. He chuckled loudly, and pointed to his own smartness in making the find.

"We'll have a lark," he gurgled, winking knowingly at the other two. "We'll take out the coin and hold it, and he'll get a shock when he comes back for the stick."

The eldest of the two gave a laughing assent, and put the gold coin in his pocket. The stick, with the knob replaced, was then put back in the same position it occupied when the fat man had discovered it. That person chuckled continually as he watched the door for the expected arrival of Felton, and his excitement marred the brilliancy of his conversation.

It wasn't a long wait. "Chicago Fred" came bustling back inside of ten minutes, and he stepped swiftly across the room and grasped his cane.

"I'm lucky!" he cried, turning to his late companions. "I was afraid you three might have left the café and thus given a person of loose morals a chance to annex my cane."

"Is it worth annexing?" asked the fat man quietly.

"Chicago Fred" turned and stared at the questioner.

"It might not look it to you," he said coldly, "but I'll wager a trifle that any sane man in the café will give me ten dollars for it."

The fat man passed a quick wink to the two young men as he reached out his hand for the cane. After examining it carefully he handed it back, and with cool insolence remarked: "It's worth seventy cents at the outside."

Mr. Frederick Felton became violently excited. He pulled a roll from his pocket and started to peel off bills with nervous fingers. The taunt stirred him.

"I'll bet you a century," he cried, angrily.

"What about?" asked the fat man.

"I'll bet that the stick is worth ten dollars to any one in the room," screamed the owner.

The fat man gave a slight whistle to signify his surprise at the other's heat, and again passed a quick wink to the two sitting opposite. The wink carried the hint that there were many good dollars belonging to Mr. Felton that might be gathered in by an enterprising person.

"I have only fifty dollars with me!" drawled the fat man, "but if one of our friends chip in for another fifty we'll cover your hundred and bet that the stick is not worth ten dollars, I'm hanged if we don't."

Mr. Frederick Felton and his fat pal received a surprise when they saw the eagerness with which the eldest of the two Pittsburghers jumped at the suggestion. The firm of Felton and Co. generally experienced a little trouble at this point, and inwardly they voted the other the very greenest of suckers as he placed five ten-dollar bills on the pile.

"I'm in," he laughed, carelessly. "I'm betting just for the fun of the thing. Now, sir, will you kindly find the jay in this room who will give ten dollars for the stick."

With a nervous smile on his face, Mr. Frederick Felton advanced to the table and unscrewed the knob of the stick. The three watched him keenly. The fat man winked ten times to the minute.

Felton gave a little start of simulated astonishment when he found the receptacle empty, and a smile started to ripple the fat features of the man who had abstracted the coin. But "Chicago Fred" was not dismayed. He had looked into that empty receptacle on many occasions when the circumstances were precisely similar, and yet his confidence had not deserted him. With an airy flourish he turned the stick in his hand, and unscrewing the ferrule end, shook the cane over the table.

Nothing fell out of it. "Chicago Fred" paled slightly and

shook the stick fiercely. When he turned the cane to look into the opening, the eldest of the two Pittsburghers reached out and put a big hand on the pile of notes.

"There's nothing in that end either," he laughed, as Felton looked into the empty hole. "While your fat partner was waiting for your return to play us for a brace of suckers, *I managed to get that other ten-dollar piece out of the bottom end, so I've spiked your gun.* I've seen the trick before, see."

"Chicago Fred" glared angrily at the three, while the fat man's profanity was seriously interfered with by the astonishment brought about by the turning of the tables.

"Here!" cried the Pittsburgher, jerking two ten-dollar gold pieces towards the owner of the cane. "Here's the two coins your pal and I took out of the stick. Now, I'll give our fat friend his own fifty dollars back, but I'm keeping the century that you plunked because you were so sure of that coin being in the bottom of the cane. If you object I'll call a cop. Skidoo! Next time you have a sucker on the line, watch the stick."

. . . . . .

When "Chicago Fred" turned the first corner, he stopped five minutes to curse the intelligence of his fat partner who had allowed a "come on" to take a cool century from the smartest bunco man in Manhattan. And the fat man could not reply because he had not recovered from the shock.

In the Desert.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

OME one has written that our souls resemble palettes tinted by the happenings of our lives, but I do not think that "French Louis" ever heard of the simile when he spoke to me about Carew. We were beating up by the Great Barrier Reef towards New Guinea, and the bull-nosed brig chartered by a Sydney Jew bumped against the oily waves like a blunt chisel bouncing off a piece of rubber. Fever-haunted New Guinea had beckoned to the gold seekers, and we were the first contingent from whose ranks malaria would pick the weakest and chase the others from the miasma-draped island. But I am forgetting the Frenchman's remark.

"Ah, heem," said Louis, nodding towards Carew, who stood moodily watching the disturbed water in our wake, "he has a soul wit red and black stripes round it. De red stripes for every bad deed done, de black ones for the days in between when dere is nuttin' doin'."

I believe if "French Louis" had a weak body instead of the perfect physique he did possess, that he would have stayed in the city and written poetry, leaving the trail-blazing work of the world for some one else. Many a good poet has been lost because Nature placed his soul in a body that could not be confined in a stuffy room.

I laughed when I heard the Frenchman's description of the color scheme of Carew's soul, but the remark stirred my imagination. It set me thinking of those big zebra spiders with the red and black striped bodies that one meets near the Alligator River in the Northern Territory. Certainly Carew wasn't a person that a believer in the palette theory would pick out as the possessor of a soul tinted with soft blues and pinks. He was

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big, coarse and domineering. His nose had been broken early in life, and the mishap seemed to have had a demoralizing effect upon the other features. A man with a broken nose needs to exercise a sharp supervision over the whole facial area. Like the one bad apple in the basket, the injured organ has a tendency to corrupt, and it will brutalize the mouth, harden the eyes, and give to the features a reckless, devil-may-care look that is not pleasing. Furthermore, Carew had wandered round the rim of the earth, tramped in the silent places and sat in the outpost camps, and that sort of life is not the kind to produce soft neutral tints, if one does admit the palette theory. I wasn't inclined to think harshly of him on account of the Frenchman's summing up, but my imagination would persist in throwing pictures of those repulsive zebra spiders on my mental canvas whenever I studied his face.

As Carew was my mate I had good opportunities for studying him. We had met while washing the golden sands of the Shoalhaven River some months before the New Guinea trip, and we had chummed without asking previous performances. Confessions between men are mostly worthless. The liar can always hide the discreditable portion of his life, while the accusing conscience of the really truthful man deftly cyanides the evidence and throws away the details that would prove his alleged bad deeds justifiable. I don't think Carew would bother to lie about his past; he wouldn't think it worth while doing so in an endeavor to retain any one's friendship, but as I had no desire to analyze those red soul stripes of which the Frenchman spoke, I asked no questions.

We were three months following the elusive footprints of Fortune in New Guinea. Then we drifted across Torres Straits, stayed for a while with the pearl fishers, and then swung hurriedly down through the Northern Territory into Western Australia. The golden gleam was just forming above Coolgardie Goldfield, and every rover south of the line was looking in that direction. Rumor shrieked the news that men on the field were stubbing their toes against nuggets as big as hotel cuspidors, and we hurried. When we reached Perth, the little city on the Swan, the town hummed like a beehive when the young swarm is leaving

for new quarters. There were battalions of miners from Charter's Towers, Broken Hill, Mt. Zeehan and Bischoff; sturdy Maorilanders who had thrown away the shears and grasped the pickaxe; and suntanned wanderers from Singapore, Durban, and the Cape, who had come swiftly to worship at the new shrine of the goddess. Deep-laden coasters rocked across The Bight and swung up around the Leuwin Light, and their captains cursed as only shore-hugging captains can curse, when their crews deserted and left them rocking idly in the river while Eastern wharves were choked with freight and passengers.

On our first night in Perth we visited a gambling outfit in Hay Street near The Colonnade, and there Carew met Kingdom. Carew didn't pretend to notice him until the boy spoke, but I think he sighted the young sucker the moment we entered the place, and had just stood off waiting to be recognized. Kingdom and a moneyed pal were making themselves rather conspicuous. They were losing heavily to a brace of sharpers, and a whisper ran round the room that choked play at the neighboring tables and brought a crowd of wild-eyed watchers round the chairs of the quartette. The boy's recklessness surprised all, and I questioned Carew.

"Has your friend, the flash kid, struck something rich on the fields?" I asked.

"No," he answered, looking pretty wicked as a big "spieler" from Melbourne relieved the youngster of a roll of one-pound notes, "He's only just over from the East — from Sydney."

I whistled softly and watched the glint in the eyes of the two sharks as they bored into the piles of the pair of fools sitting opposite. Occasionally the kid laughed, one of those hysterical little laughs, and whenever I hear one I always think of old "Blazer" Smith of Rockhampton. Smith used to go "blackbirding" down the Islands to collect Kanakas for the Queensland sugar plantations, and the old devil crimped me on one of his man-catching trips. When his old tank was pawing her way up towards Brisbane on the run home, H. M. S. *Royal Arthur* signalled Smith to wait a moment, but Smith said it wasn't visiting day for the two hundred husky niggers that the old scoundrel had stowed under the hatches, and he didn't like to shock

the English captain of the man-o'-war with their appearance. We ran, but that warboat slung a shell at us, and it flopped right into the engine room, and the engines gave one of those hysterical giggles before a civil war started amongst the several parts disturbed by the shot. It was just the same kind of giggle that Kingdom gave every time one of those sleek wolves dipped deep into his trousers pocket. I understood that kind of laugh. The boy was a flash, brainless fool, without stability enough to hold him straight in the face of a tenth-rate temptation, and going home that evening I gave my opinion about him to Carew.

"Yes, he's all that and more," he snapped, after I had unloaded my opinion.

"What's the trouble?" I asked, curious to know the reason of his apparent bad temper.

"Oh, nothing," he said quietly. "I knew his people over in the East, and I'm sorry. It's the first time they've taken their hands off the lever, and he's tearing along with the throttle open."

"And a big ditch in front," I added.

After a little silence Carew spoke again.

"It would kill his mother to see him carrying on like that," he said. "He's a waster."

I was a bit surprised at finding Carew's sentiment stratum. Generally he was as selfish as a head-hunting Dyak, and as long as he wasn't the underneath man in a battle of brains or muscle, he had no particular animus against the fellow on top. And when you find a stratum like that, in what you might call unlikely country, there's a good reason somewhere or other.

He wanted to stay a few days in Perth to keep an eye on that young sprig, and I objected. I saw that the boy didn't like interference, and I had no pity. Besides, every window in the town was packed full of lumps of stone with the gold oozing out of it like jam out of a tart that a kid has been squeezing, and I couldn't waste time watching fresh youngsters who wouldn't take advice from their betters. That sprig's affairs were nothing to do with me, and if he wouldn't pull clear of a brace of sharps I didn't see why I should stay and play the part of the good Samaritan.

"But I knew his people," said Carew, speaking in a manner

that would make one think that the reason was as strong as the rock of Gibraltar.

"To hell with his people," I snorted.

A man will say anything when there is a mint that nobody owns a few hundred miles in front of him, but the look that Carew gave me when I made that remark nearly tempted me to apologize. I thought of "French Louis" with his chatter about the color scheme of Carew's soul, and I thought of those big-bellied spiders.

We were at Southern Cross four days later, and there we heard about the smash-up that the hysterical laugh prophesied. The big "spieler" that had rooked Kingdom had been found with a bullet in his brain garage, and the police wanted an interview with that flash fool. No one knew who did the shooting, there wasn't a particle of evidence, but the crook had taken about nine hundred pounds in notes off Kingdom, so the Law surmised that the ass had screwed up his courage and handed the bunco man a leaden pellet as a souvenir of the occasion. I said there was no evidence, but the fool had disappeared, and that swung the fat finger of suspicion straight in his direction, although the police were puzzled to know where that direction lay. They knew that he didn't leave by water, so they guessed he was making inland towards the goldfields, and they were on the lookout at Southern Cross. When I heard about the affair I told Carew about those giggling engines of old "Blazer" Smith, but when he asked me why I was so certain the fool did the shooting, he festooned his question with the hottest lot of curse words I've heard outside of a tramp steamer.

The news affected Carew. The railway line did not run past Southern Cross in those days — this happened before the business of selling salted mines to confiding Cockney investors became such a lucrative business in Westralia — and Carew astonished me by announcing that he would, instead of paying the enormous price demanded for transportation to the field, tramp the big stretch over the sandy wastes to the new camp. Little heaps of whitened bones were just beginning to dot those gray plains, and I kicked vigorously against the proposition, but he was firm, and in the end I consented.

On the first morning out on that wind-flattened stretch, Carew

was silent and ill-tempered, but in the afternoon he spoke of Kingdom.

"I told you I knew his people in the East," he said. "I was brought up alongside them. His old man owns a sheep station at Tambaroora, near where I was born. They're pious, straight-laced people, and if he's caught and they prove that he did that shooting, the hanging job will just kill them."

"How many in the family?" I asked.

"One sister and that fool. His sister—" He broke off suddenly and kicked at his dog, a cross-bred dingo, that with true dingo cunning was trying to walk in the little tongue of shadow thrown by its master.

"What about the sister?" I queried, immediately scenting the cause of that strange outcrop of sentiment that had surprised me at Perth.

"Oh, nothing much," he snarled, detecting the note of curiosity in my voice. Then, after a while, he added: "I might have married her only I got this broken nose and a bad reputation at the same time."

He started to whistle as an intimation that he did not wish to be questioned, but I had sufficient imagination to fill up the bare spaces. Besides, my lips were too dry. But afterwards he kept on repeating the assertion that the hanging of that fool would kill his parents till I got tired of listening. When you are jammed between a yellow sun and a plain of white sand you feel as if you want to put a corner on your pity and use it up upon yourself. That's how I felt. The slippery sand got away from under our boots, and I pulled my right foot out of a hole by sticking my left foot into one and leaning forward to get the leverage. Then I went through the movement with legs reversed. I had a dream that night in which I saw the damned souls in Sheol walking around in a sandpit as punishment for their sins, and I cursed Carew's thrift when I awoke and looked at the white stretch before us.

The second day was worse than the first. We were a good way off the regular track, and Carew kept scouting round, viewing the plain from the top of hummocks, and nonsense of that sort, till I got mad with him. It looked by the way he was trying to

get good peeps at the country that he really enjoyed walking in that slippery mess, and I cursed his antics. My eyeballs were dry and painful, and the sun's rays tickled my face and hands till they felt as if they had been sprayed with vitriol. My legs seemed to be fully eighteen inches longer than when I left Southern Cross, and my loins ached as the sand tugged relentlessly. I didn't ask Carew how he was feeling; he was too busy scouting, and I was annoyed because he had induced me to walk when I could have paid my fare and gone up to the fields in comfort.

That night a moon, with a film over it like the glaze over a dead man's eye, rose out of the sand and we lay and watched it. The plain stretched around like a sheet of white paper under a globe of deep blue glass, and in the intense silence our whispers became hoarse bass tones as they rolled out over the sea of sand. My mind associated the ticking of my watch with the pounding of the riveters at the Hawkesbury Bridge where I had worked many years before.

Somewhere near midnight there came a faint "Coo-ee" from a sand ridge to the right, and Carew sprang up and answered it.

"Somebody has lost the track," I cried, and then I followed Carew as he dashed madly across the sand.

As we reached the foot of the ridge, a man staggered over it, stood for a moment outlined against the dropping moon, and then fell forward on his hands and knees. Carew muttered something and raced up the rise, with me following. Between us we carried the lost one to our camp, and in spite of the blackened lips and the red-raw face, I recognized Kingdom. I didn't wonder any more about Carew's scouting tactics. I never asked him afterward how he had discovered the fact that made him tramp across that hot plain, but he had evidently received some information at Southern Cross of which he had not spoken.

The boy was delirious, raving from the heat and thirst, and after we had done all we could to ease his sufferings, he started to babble of that shooting at Perth. He had reached Southern Cross before the police had been informed, and in sheer fright he had slipped out into that waterless desert by himself. I could imagine him doing any fool stunt after hearing that peculiar giggle every few minutes that night in the gambling outfit.

All through the night Carew sat beside the boy. I wanted to relieve him, but he sent me away with a growl, so I lay awake and listened. I mentioned the intense silence out on that plain — well, every word that crazy fool uttered made a noise like an elevated train, and went thumping out over the wastes, starting little avalanches of dry sand on the sides of the dunes. It was a devil of a night. Now and then, that delirious youngster would imagine the police were near him, and he would spring up and fight furiously with Carew, who soothed him as a woman soothes a sick child. The heat had crazed him, and the little brain that he had possessed before the shooting had been completely turned. A thousand times he described that happening at Perth, and each time he went over the details he would shriek about his people, and mutter about the agony they would suffer if he was caught by the police and strung up. Sometimes he pictured Carew as a policeman, and then he struggled and fought furiously. I rolled away over the hot sand, but his wearisome confessions followed me, and the words hit my ears like blows from an open hand.

Carew sat like a sphinx, his jaw gripped in the heel of his hand. Once or twice through that long night I came near him and spoke, but he answered me sullenly, and I retreated to the plain, over which the shrieks of that crazy murderer went rushing like so many monster knives that tore the silence into little threads. Besides, I thought it right for Carew to sit with him after what he had said about the sister. I guessed that it wasn't her fault he got the broken nose and the bad reputation that prohibited him from marrying her, so he was doing something to put against the pain that his tricks caused her years before. And it was that sister's name that the boy yelled loudest and more often than any other.

"Don't tell her!" he would yell. "Don't let her know that I shot him! Don't! Don't!"

And that big giant would stroke his head and soothe him, whispering to him that they would never know, although Kingdom was in such a condition that he could not understand a word. I guess if "French Louis" saw Carew that night he would reckon that he had a bit of rose pink hidden beneath those stripes of red and black that he was so certain about.

The sun came up at last, and inquisitive beams raced across the sand towards us, as if they would question the cause of our delay. Under ordinary circumstances we should have left camp at daybreak, but the discovery of the night previous had upset our schedule. I had questioned Carew as to what he intended to do, but he evaded my questions and sat staring at the poor fool on the sand.

Then, as the morning advanced, I saw what Carew had seen long before. It was only a question of minutes with Kingdom. but the heat-crazed brain was fermenting with the details of the shooting, and he babbled ceaselessly as to how he did it and why he did it. About eight o'clock the sun's rays had licked up the little strip of shadow in which he was lying, and we moved him under a ledge that projected from the side of a big hummock. A tropical storm had washed away a part of the base of the sand-hill, and this ledge stuck out like a gigantic lip, the moisture on the under side being sufficient to bind it to the dune. We spread our blankets in the little strip of shadow beneath it, and then laid Kingdom down carefully upon them. Now and then he seemed to have moments of sanity, and it was then that his horror of his doings being made known to his people led him to shriek wildly, while Carew soothed him and moistened his lips at intervals. I moved away out of hearing, for the end was pretty close then, and his mumbled repetition of the details of the shooting made me sick. I sauntered down the track, pondering as I walked over the peculiar tricks of Destiny which had brought Carew to minister to the boy during his last hours.

Presently I looked across the plain in the direction of Southern Cross, and what I saw made me hurry back to the camp. I touched Carew on the shoulder and pointed out over the plain where the sunbeams glinted on the nickel-plated furnishings of the two approaching horsemen.

"They're on the scent," I murmured.

Carew sprang up and stared at the spot where the beams splattered in the thick heat haze, then he bent down and felt the pulse of the dying boy who was still disturbing the silence with his muttered confessions. Carew folded the boy's arms upon his breast, and then kneeling beside him watched the babbling lips

that refused to be still about the crime, although Death was choking them slowly into silence. I wondered afterward whether Carew was praying during the few minutes he knelt there. Suddenly he sprang up, took another glance at the rapidly approaching horsemen, then rushed up the sand hill, and, before I could divine his intention, sprang into the air and landed heavily upon the lip of sand that protected Kingdom from the sun!

You know how dry sand will roll if you start it? Well, about two tons of that bank came down like an avalanche, and Carew picked himself up and looked round at the white wall of glittering sand that told nothing of what it concealed.

For a moment I stood staring stupidly at the blind face of the hill. Then I rushed forward.

"You've — you've —" I stammered, but Carew swung round and, catching me by the collar of the shirt, flung me backwards.

"He wouldn't last an hour"— He whipped the words out with his mouth close to my face — "but that would have given those man-hunting troopers time to hear the truth from his own lips. Now, no one knows who committed the murder in Perth, and his people will never believe he did it."

He glared at me as I picked myself up and moved a step forward. The hill fascinated me.

"If you make those swine suspicious I'll kill you," he growled "I'll kill you — do you hear? Damn the Law! He's paid the penalty, so why make those others suffer with the knowledge that he was a murderer?"

He picked up the waterbag and billycan, and swung off towards Coolgardie. I looked around stupidly for the blankets, remembered with a shudder where they were, and then, hurriedly grasping the flour bag, I followed him. And, strange to say, at that very moment I thought "French Louis" was a fool.

Two hundred yards down the hot track the mounted troopers overtook us, and rode on after scrutinizing us carefully.

The Liar.*

BY ZONA DAVIDSON.

LIZABETH MOORE turned impatiently at the call of a weak voice that came from an inner room. She had been watching the tall, virile form of Dr. Gresham as he passed through the gate and entered his car, waving a good by to her, and her eyes were heavy with the memory of the kiss she had permitted him to give her while the Man slept in the darkened room.

Now the Man had awakened and his call had taken the sunshine out of her eyes and the eager youthfulness from her face. Yet, when she entered the sick room, she smiled and softly asked :

" Is there something I can do for you, dear ? "

" What did the Doctor say," the Man asked, weakly. " You two seem to have a lot of secrets; I could scarcely hear your voices."

" The Doctor left these beautiful roses for you," Elizabeth answered, evasively.

" Throw them out," he said. " Why don't he save his white roses until I am dead. They chill what little blood is left. I hate white roses."

Elizabeth put the flowers where he could not see them and he watched her as she moved about the room. Suddenly he said :

" Gresham loves you, Elizabeth."

The color flooded Elizabeth's face and she turned quickly away. It was true. And it was sweet. Gresham did love her and only this — this mistake stood between her and happiness.

" You — you — love him ? " the man asked, timidly, his voice weak with fear. " You don't love him, Elizabeth ? "

She turned quickly and flung herself down by the bed, her strong young arms enfolding the Man.

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"No, dear, no, no," she said, and pressed her soft mouth against his wasted throat. "I only love you, only you, dear."

The Man gently pushed her away.

"Sometimes, Elizabeth," he said, with a pathos that hurt her, "sometimes I think of the terrible price you have paid for your little happiness. When we did it — "

He stopped a moment, then went on —

"When we ran away, I believed I could make you happy. Always remember that I believed I could make you happy, won't you dear ? But you were eighteen and I — I was forty."

"Hush," she said, soothingly, "hush. You will only excite yourself. I sacrificed nothing and I have nothing to regret. You have made me happy, always. It was You who paid the price. You gave up your home and your children, your business and your friends, you even disgraced the name you were so proud of, for my sake, and all I have given you has been my foolish love. Yet I did — I do love you."

"Do you really love me ?" he asked, eagerly.

For a moment Elizabeth's eyes closed and her face was drawn and old, then she silently answered by pressing the Man still closer to her breast; she kissed him and crooned over him, calling him a thousand endearing names, until he fell asleep.

When she arose to her feet and gently placed his head back on the pillow, her lips were as white as her cheeks.

"God! What a Liar I am," she whispered. "What a Liar!"

The room seemed to stifle her, so she stepped out on the porch again. The twilight was closing in and the birds were bidding the dying day a farewell that was pregnant with the content of the homeward bound. Elizabeth leaned against the railing and let the cool petals of the nasturtiums touch her cheeks.

The sun faded from the sky and the stars came out, one by one, still she stood motionless. At last, as the moon bathed her in a soft radiance, she stirred uneasily.

"What a farce life is," she whispered. "Two years ago I asked only the right to bear his name, to tell the world I was his wife ; to forget the shame of being — just the Other Woman, and then — She died. I was glad. It meant that He was all mine and we need never hide any more."

She tried to count the few months that the ecstacy of possession had thrilled her and was conscious that though the fire had swiftly burned out, there had always been a feeling of ineffable peace until she met Gresham.

And while she mused upon him, she heard his step on the walk and sprang forward to meet him. In the moonlight she searched his face and its peculiar expression chilled her.

"How is he?" he asked, tersely.

"About the same," she answered. "What is the matter? Is anything wrong?"

"Yes," he said. "I don't know how to tell you this, Elizabeth, but I have been fighting with myself ever since — since this afternoon and even before. I love you, dear." He paused.

"Well?" she questioned.

"You will have to get another Doctor for him. I am afraid to trust myself. I can't help hoping — don't shrink like that, I am not a murderer, but I hate him because he dared wreck your life with his selfish passion and I hate him because I love you. The temptation is terrible! A little negligence, the wrong medicine — God! I can't face it, girl. Don't listen to me, the temptation is damnable. I cannot attend him any longer."

Elizabeth stood silently facing the clear sky, and the expression in her eyes startled Gresham.

He tried to take her in his arms, but she fought herself free.

"Tell me," she commanded, and grasped his wrist until her fingers seemed to press the bone. "Tell me, have you — do you mean —"

"Elizabeth," Gresham said, sharply, "I have at least a little honor. I am not a murderer. I simply asked you to take the temptation from me."

Elizabeth suddenly sobbed and pushed him aside.

"Don't touch me," she said, "don't dare touch me. I'm going to get another Doctor. I want him to live, I want him to live, I didn't lie, I love him, oh, how I love him!"

And Gresham watched her stumble into the house.

An Appeal to Hermes.*

BY JESSE LEROY DIBERT.

MARIELLA reached her graceful jeweled hand under the edge of the mahogany table and pressed an electric button. Then with sinuous ease she sank back into her chair to await the maid's response. She was a slender young woman with blue eyes and hair fine and yellow as if spun by golden spiders. Her fair complexion glowed with a color accentuated by the light from a red lamp. She was gowned simply yet smartly in white trimmed with blue.

The door of the luxuriously furnished room opened and a trim servant appeared.

"Susanne, bring me a deck of cards from the library." The words fell rich and clear of tone. Could a silver bell speak, it had not a voice more sweet than that of Mariella.

"Yes, Mademoiselle," answered the maid with soft deference, vanishing as she noiselessly closed the door.

Her lovely mistress leaned slowly forward in her seat, drew a vase of yellow roses across the dusky red polished mahogany, and drank deeply of the precious perfume. Satisfied with the cloying fragrance, she pushed the flowers from her and lifted her eyes to a bronze figure of winged Hermes standing on a pedestal near the opposite side of the table. The youthful god was balancing himself on the toes of one shapely foot, as if about to take flight for Mount Olympus.

Mariella extended her arms in supplication toward the beautiful pagan deity.

"Hermes, O god of chance," she spoke, and her voice was caressing and subtly pleading. "I implore thee be true to thy faithful votaress in her time of greatest need."

There came a discreet knocking on the door. As Mariella

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lay back in her chair, the maid re-entered. The latter placed the cards on the table and silently withdrew.

Still reclining in her seat, Mariella stretched out her hands and toyed with the glossy gilt-edged cards. The rubies, emeralds and diamonds on her fingers flashed red and green and white. With a deft movement the young woman scattered the deck, faces up, on the table. She shoved the pictured pieces of thin pasteboard this way and that until she had found the jack of hearts and the jack of clubs. The other cards she pushed to one side.

Straightening herself up in her chair, Mariella bent slightly over the table and gazed intently at the two jacks. Her eyes began to shine like gems of deep blue, her cheeks flamed, her bosom heaved, her delicate nostrils dilated. Her movements were quick and undulating as a cat's.

She placed her right forefinger on the jack of hearts and said aloud, "You shall be Harold Worthington, for he is blond and gay and handsome and has such a darling little mustache."

"And you," she spoke to the jack of clubs, transferring her right forefinger to the pasteboard image, "shall be John Medford, for he is dark and serious and has beautiful big black eyes."

Next, with lightning skill, Mariella gathered up the other cards, placed them faces down and tapped them into precise order. Thus piled she placed them near the upturned jacks.

"And, now, Hermes," she addressed the bronze metal figure, "a few words with you before I put these jacks in the deck and learn my fate. This is really serious business, you lovely pagan god. Marriage is a far more important matter now and here than in ancient times in Greece. Previous to proceeding with this momentous game of chance, however, Hermes, permit me to steady my nerves a little."

From a small box of silver filigree, Mariella selected a perfumed cigarette. Lighting it, she puffed it daintily, blowing a thin column of bluish smoke across the table toward Hermes, as if it were incense she were offering him. She uttered not a word until she had finished the cigarette and dropped the smoldering tip in a brass ash-tray.

"You see, Hermes, you have been a very good friend of mine

for several years," Mariella said to the god, "and that is why I entrust my future happiness to you to-night. How many prizes at card parties have my prayers to you not brought me? How often have I not drawn the lucky lottery tickets through you? How many hundreds of dollars have I not won by your aid at the race-track? I give you all the credit, Hermes, for whenever I have sought your help in games of chance, I have been successful; whenever I have scorned you as impotent, I have lost. Thus I have come to place the greatest reliance in you. And whomever you cause to be first drawn in these cards to-night, him shall I wed. I swear it by all that I hold dear. You shall choose for me my husband, Hermes, god of gamblers.

Mariella drew the vase of roses to her again. Picking them one by one from the receptable, she wove of them a wreath. This she hung about the statue's neck, saying, "There, was ever god of Greece more prettily decked?"

Returning to her chair, the modern votaress of the ancient deity laid her sparkling hands one near the other on the table and fixed her lustrous eyes upon the wily god of luck.

"I must tell you, Hermes," she continued, "about Harold Worthington and John Medford that you may better judge between them. Of course, you have seen them here frequently, but I venture you have paid little attention to them. Now, I have made a profound study of both men — though I never let them suspect that I was anything but indifferent to them." She laughed musically. "Really, Hermes, you men are so easily spoiled it never does for a girl to allow you to know how much she values you."

There followed a repetition of the discreet rapping on the door.

"Come in," responded Mariella.

The maid opened the door and stood upon the threshold.

"Your aunt wishes to know if you expect callers this evening. If not, she requests you to come up to her bedroom and read to her."

"Tell her I am expecting company."

The neat servant remained on the threshold, hesitating to say something further.

"What else did my aunt instruct you to tell me?" queried Mariella with a smile of amusement at the maid's apparent embarrassment.

"She said that if Mr. Medford calls, you are not to be at home to him."

"Indeed, Susanne, inform my aunt that maybe I'll be at home to Mr. Medford to-night and maybe I'll not. It all depends on circumstances over which neither my aunt nor myself has any control."

"Very well, Mademoiselle." Susanne in withdrawing was unable to suppress a glance of mystification at her charming mistress.

"When we were interrupted, Hermes," Mariella began, "I was about to tell you something of the two men for whom these two fateful jacks stand. Now this man Worthington is a witty fellow and much given to laughing. I like a man who laughs, for he keeps one from becoming gloomy and sad. But who knows that he might not turn his wit upon me after marriage had made him familiar?" The fair speaker paused and lifted her eyebrows in question at Hermes.

"Worthington is handsome — very. Even you must have noted his fine looks, Hermes. And he is rich, and that is much in these days." She sighed. "Too much, I fear. We moderns are not satisfied with the simple clothes and plain living of you ancients. It may be that we are degenerate in our fondness for money, but I must admit that I like money and what money buys.

"And Worthington loves me. No doubt of that. And I — well, I don't know, and I can't decide whether I love him or John Medford. I've tried to make choice between them for many months now. You understand, of course, Hermes, that it is time I was married. My aunt tells me so every morning at breakfast. She was married at sixteen and she thinks it terrible that I've waited until I'm twenty-four.

"But I digress. Let us now talk about John Medford. The great drawback to John is that he's poor — poor, that is, in this epoch. In an earlier and more primitive age his means would have been considered sufficient. But he couldn't afford to keep even one auto for his wife or to give her jewels and elegant

clothes or —or — oh, there is so much he couldn't do for a wife that it wearies me to think of it.

"He is so serious, too. Really his wife would have to contribute all of the humorous talent at meals. John is not half bad-looking. In fact, I think him very nice-looking, except when he is in the same room with Worthington. Then the comparison is too much for him. But his eyes, oh, his glorious big black eyes, Hermes, with their long thick black lashes and the whites as clear as purest milk! And when they look love at one! Oh, I tell you, Hermes, if he were not poor, he might not have to take his chance with Worthington at all."

Mariella shook her head and an expression vaguely cynical showed on her features as she proceeded. "Even my aunt would have no objection to John Medford if he had money. As it is she has forbidden me to consider him in the way of marriage under penalty of disinheritance. Think of it — disinheritance — what a frightful lot for me who have been pampered and petted by a millionaire aunt and taught to look forward to falling heir to her fortune — if I do not displease her!

"But you shall direct the cards, Hermes, and I shall abide by the result, even if John Medford and disinheritance are drawn first. I have always been a true sportswoman and I always shall be."

With steady fingers Mariella took up the jack of hearts and turning it face down shoved it into the deck. She repeated the action with the jack of clubs. There was no trace of nervousness in the young woman's movements as she shuffled and reshuffled the cards. But her tense feeling was displayed by her glowing eyes, her quivering nostrils and closely pressed lips and burning cheeks.

She stacked the cards. Of a sudden the bell of the clock beat twice and Mariella started like a deer surprised by the report of a rifle. She gave an abashed laugh as she looked at the timepiece, noting it was half past eight.

"Hermes," she intoned softly, "I am ashamed of myself. I never acted like that before. I have lost hundreds of dollars without the winking of an eye. But this matter of a husband certainly does make me apprehensive. Well, here goes."

Mariella placed the cards carefully stacked in front of her and

turned the first card face up — and drew a breath of relief. It was the two of spades. Another card was turned up and another. One-third of the pack was thus taken from the stacked portion, when the young woman desisted. She breathed hard. Lines of delicate veins stood out on her forehead like the tracery on a leaf. Again she began to turn the cards. The first one called forth another sigh of relief. It was the tray of diamonds. The pack was two-thirds gone. Finnally ten cards only remained with faces down.

Mariella looked appealingly at Hermes, placed her finger on the topmost card and flung it over. She gasped and her face went white. It was the jack of hearts — Harold Worthington.

There came into Mariella's face no expression of relief that the choice was made and doubt ended. Instead there dawned there a deep misery. She gazed at the card blankly, then at Hermes. Despair imaged itself upon her countenance.

Then with a flash of rage, Mariella gathered the cards together and threw them wildly across the table at Hermes. They fell pattering upon the pagan god and fluttered to the floor around the pedestal.

"Hermes, you little monster," came the shrill words.

A knock at the door brought Mariella from her chair with a leap that upset it. The maid entered in alarm.

But Mariella's face was already composed and cold, and next almost instantly sweet and serene.

"A trifling accident," she said, calmly, to Susanne, who restored the chair to its upright position.

"Mr. Medford is in the reception hall, Mademoiselle," was Susanne's announcement with a polite question in her voice.

Mariella glanced at Hermes, then spoke. "Show him in, Susanne, and if Mr. Worthington calls, tell him I'm not at home."

"Yes, Mademoiselle," replied the vanishing maid.

Mariella sank into her chair.

Her low silvery laugh rippled through the room.

"Hermes, you must excuse me."

For Love of the Hills.*

BY SUSAN KEATING GLASPELL.

(This story, which THE BLACK CAT published five years ago and for which it paid $500, is reprinted here by the urgent request of many old as well as new readers of the magazine.)

URE you're done with it?"

"Oh, yes," said the girl, the suggestion of a smile on her face, and in her voice the suggestion of a tear. "Yes; I was just going."

But she did not go. She turned instead to the end of the alcove and sat down before a table placed by the window. Leaning her elbows upon it she looked about her through a blur of tears.

It was quiet that afternoon in the big reading-room; few were coming and going, and outside it was raining — raining as in that city alone it knows how to rain.

Seen through her own eyes of longing it seemed to the girl that almost all of the people whom she could see standing before the files of the daily papers were enlisted in Chicago's great army of the homesick. The reading-room had been a strange study to her during those three weeks spent in fruitless search for the work she wanted to do, and it had likewise proved a strange comfort. When tired and disconsolate and utterly sick at heart there was always one thing she could do — she could go down to the library and look at the paper from home. It was not that she wanted the actual news of Denver. She did not care in any vital way what the city officials were doing, what buildings were going up, or who was leaving town. She was only indifferently interested in the fires and the murders. She wanted only the comforting companionship of that paper from home.

It seemed there were many to whom the papers offered that same sympathy, companionship, whatever it might be. More than anything else it perhaps gave to them — the searchers, the drifters — a sense of anchorage. She would not soon forget the first day she herself had stumbled in there and found the home

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paper. The city had given her nothing but rebuffs that day, and in a sort of desperation, just because she must go somewhere, and did not want to go back to her boarding-place, she had hunted out the city library. It was when walking listlessly about in the big reading-room that there had come to her the illumining thought that perhaps she could find the paper from home; she did find it. After that when things were their worst, when her throat grew tight and her eyes dim, she could always comfort herself by saying: "After a while I'll run down and look at the paper from home."

But to-night it had failed her. It was not the paper from home to-night. It was just a newspaper. It did not inspire the belief that things would be better to-morrow, that it would all come right soon. It left her as she had come — heavy with the consciousness that in her purse was eleven dollars, and that that was every cent she had in all the world.

It was hard to hold back the tears as she dwelt upon the fact that it was very little she had asked of Chicago. She had asked only a chance to do the work for which she was trained, in order that she might go to the art classes at night. She had read in the papers of that mighty young city of the Middle West — the heart of the continent — of its brawn and its brain and its grit. She had supposed that Chicago, of all places, would appreciate what she wanted to do. The day she drew her hard-earned one hundred dollars from the bank in Denver — how the sun had shone that day in Denver, how clear the sky had been, and how bracing the air! — she had quite taken it for granted that her future was assured. And now, after tasting for three weeks the cruelty of indifference, she looked back to those visions with a hard little smile.

She rose to go, and in so doing her eye fell upon the queer little woman to whom she had yielded her place before the Denver paper. Submerged as she had been in her own heartache, she had given no heed to the small figure which came slipping along beside her, beyond the bare thought that she was queer-looking. But as her eyes rested upon her now there was something about the woman which held her.

She was a strange little figure. An old-fashioned shawl was pinned tightly about her shoulders, and she was wearing an odd,

rusty little bonnet. Her hair was rolled up in a small knot at the back of her head. She did not look as though she belonged in Chicago. And then, as the girl stood there looking at her, she saw the thin shoulders quiver, and after a minute the head went down into the folds of the Denver paper, and the woman was sobbing with a quiet tragicalness.

The girl's own eyes filled, and she turned to go. It seemed she could scarcely bear her own heartache that day, without coming close to the heartache of another. But when she reached the end of the alcove she glanced backward, and the sight of that shabby, bent figure was not to be withstood.

"I am from Colorado, too," she said, softly, putting a hand upon the bent shoulders.

The woman looked up at that, and took the girl's hand in both of her thin, trembling ones. The girl saw that there was a hopelessness upon the wan face, and that in those eyes there was a dimness — a misty, blurred look — which did not seem to have been left there by the tears alone.

"And do you have a pining for the mountains?" she whispered, with a kind of timid eagerness. "Do you have a feeling that you want to see the sun sink behind them to-night, and see the darkness come slippin' down from the tops?"

The girl half turned away her head, but she pressed the woman's hand tightly in hers. "I know what you mean," she said, tremulously.

"I want to see it so bad," continued the woman, with the passionateness of the defeated, "that something just drove me here to this paper. I knowed it was here because my nephew's wife brought me here one day and we come across it. We took this paper at home for more 'an twenty years. That's why I come. 'Twas the closest I could get."

"I know what you mean," said the girl again, her voice thick with tears now.

"And it's the closest I ever will get!" sobbed the woman.

"Oh, don't say that," said the girl, brushing away her own tears, and trying to smile; "you'll go back home some day."

The woman shook her head. "And if I should," she said, "even if I should, 't will be too late."

"But it couldn't be too late," insisted the girl. "The mountains, you know, will be there forever."

"The mountains will be there forever," repeated the woman, musingly; "yes, but not for me to see. You see," she said it with a quivering dignity, "I'm going blind."

"Oh!" — the girl took a quick, backward step, and then stretched out two impulsive hands — "oh, no, no, you're not! The doctors, you know; they do everything now."

The woman shook her head. "That's what I thought when I come here. That's why I come. But I saw the biggest doctor of them all to-day, — they all say he's the biggest of them all, — and he said right out and out 't was no use to do anything. He said 't was — hopeless."

The last word came with a dry sob. "You see," she hurried on, the words wet with tears now, "I wouldn't care so much, seems like I wouldn't care 't all, if I could get there first! If I could see the sun go down behind 'em just one night! If I could see the black shadows come slippin' over 'em just once! And then, if just one morning — just once! — I could get up and see the sunlight come a streamin' — oh, you know how it looks! You know what 't is I want to see!"

"Yes; but why can't you? Why not? You won't go — your eyesight will last until you get back home, won't it?"

"But I can't go back home, not now."

"Why not?" demanded the girl. "Why can't you go home?"

"Why, there ain't no money, my dear," she explained, patiently. "It's a long way off — Colorado is, and there ain't no money. Now, George, — George is my brother-in-law, — he got me the money to come; but you see it took it all to come here, and to pay them doctors. And George, — he ain't rich, and it pinched him hard for me to come, — he says I'll have to wait until he gets money laid up again, and — well he can't tell just when 't will be. He'll send it soon as he gets it," she hastened to add. "He's willin', but he can't send what he ain't got."

"But what are you going to do in the meantime? It would cost less to get you home than to keep you here."

"No; I stay with my nephew here. He's willin' I should stay with him till I get my money to go home."

"Yes; but this nephew, can't he get you the money? Doesn't he know" — the girl's voice broke — "what it means to you?"

"He's got five children, and not much laid up. And then, he never seen the mountains. He don't know what I mean when I try to tell him about gettin' there in time. Why, he says there's many a one living back in the mountains would like to be livin' here. He don't understand, — my nephew don't, — she added, apologetically.

"Well, some one ought to understand!" broke from the girl. "I understand! But — why, eleven dollars is every cent I've got in the world!" — and the girl who had sturdily held out against her own sorrows leaned her head over on the shelf upon which the paper rested, and cried as if the tears were coming from the very depth of her heart.

"Don't!" implored the woman, putting a hand upon the bowed head. "Now, don't you be botherin'. I didn't mean to make you feel so bad. My nephew says I ain't reasonable, and maybe I ain't."

"But you are reasonable! It's awful for you not to go! It's — hideous!"

"Maybe I ought to be going back," said the woman, uncertainly. "I'm just making you feel bad, and it won't do no good. And then they may come back and be stirred up about me. Emma — Emma's my nephew's wife — left me at the doctor's office 'cause she had some trading to do, and she was to come back there for me. And then, as I was sittin' there, the pinin' came over me so strong it seemed I just must get up and start! And" — she smiled a little — "this was far as I got."

"Come over and sit down by this table," said the girl, impulsively, "and tell me a little about your home back in the mountains. Wouldn't you like to?"

The woman nodded, gratefully. "Seems most like getting back to them to find some one that knows about them," she said, after they had drawn their chairs up to the table and were sitting there side by side.

The girl put her rounded hand over on the thin, withered one. "Tell me about it," she said again.

"Maybe it wouldn't be much interesting to you, my dear. 'Tain't much like a story. It's just a common life — mine is.

You see, William and I — William was my husband — we went to Georgetown before it really was any town at all. Years and years before the railroad went through we was there. Was you ever there?" she asked, wistfully.

"Oh, very often," replied the girl. "I love every inch of that country!"

A big tear rolled down the woman's face. "It's most like being home to find some one that knows about it," she whispered, brokenly.

"Yes, William and I we went there when 'twas all new country," she went on, after a sympathetic pause. "We worked hard, and we laid up a little money. Then, three years ago, William took sick. He was sick for most a year, and we had to live up most of what we'd saved. That's why I ain't got none now. It ain't that William didn't provide."

The girl nodded. "We seen some hard days. But we was always harmonious — William and I. William had a great fondness for the mountains. The night before he died he made them take him over by the window and he looked out and watched the darkness come stealin' over the daylight — you know how it does in them mountains. "Mother," he says to me — his voice was that low I could no more 'an hear what he said — "I'll never see another sun go down, but I'm thankful to God that I seen this one."

She was crying outright now, and the girl did not try to stop her. "And that's the reason I love the mountains," she whispered at last. "It ain't just that they're grand and wonderful to look at. It ain't just the things them tourists see to talk about. But the mountains has always been like a comfortin' friend to me. John and Sarah is buried there — John and Sarah is my two children that died of fever. And then William is there — like I just told you. And the mountains was a comfort to me in all those times of trouble. They're like an old friend. Seems like they're the best friend I've got on earth."

"I know just what you mean," said the girl, brokenly. "I know all about it."

"And you don't think I'm just notional" — a moving wistfulness was in the woman's voice — "in pinin' to get back while — whilst I can look at them?"

The girl held the old hand tightly in hers with a clasp more sympathetic than words.

"It ain't but I'd know they was there. I could feel they was there all right, but" — her voice sank to a horrified whisper now — "do you know I'm 'fraid I might forget just how they look!"

"Oh, but you wouldn't," the girl assured her. "You'd remember just how they look."

"I'm scared of it. I'm scared there might be something I'd forget. And so I just torment myself thinkin' — 'Now do I remember this? Can I see just how that looks?' That's the way I got to thinkin' up in the doctor's office, when he told me for sure it was no use to operate, and I was so worked up it just seemed like I must get up and start!"

"You must try not to worry about it," murmured the girl. "You'll remember."

"Well, maybe so. Maybe I will. But that's why I want just one more look. If I could look once more I'd remember it forever and ever. You see I'd look for to remember it, and I would. And do you know — seems like I wouldn't mind going blind so much then? When I'd sit facin' them I'd just say to myself: 'Now I know just how they look. I'm seeing them just as if I had my eyes!' The doctor says my sight'll just kind of slip away, and when I look my last look, when it gets dimmer and dimmer to me, I want the last thing I see to be them mountains where William and me worked and was so happy! Seems like I can't bear it to have my sight slip away here in Chicago, where there's nothing I want to look at! And then to have a little left — to have just a little left! — and to know I could see if I was there to look — and to know that when I get there 'twill be — oh, I'll be rebellious-like here — and I'd be contented there! I don't want to be complainin' — I don't want to! — but when I've only got a little left I want it — oh, I want it for them things I want to see!"

"You *will* see them!" said the girl, with a tearful passionateness. "The world can't be so hideous as that!"

"Well, maybe so," said the woman, rising. "But I don't know where 'twill come from," she added, doubtfully.

She took the woman back to the doctor's office and left her in the care of the stolid Emma. "Seems most like I'd been back

home," she said in parting, and the girl promised to come and see her and talk with her of the far-away home in the mountains. The woman said she thought talking about them would help her to remember just how they looked.

And then the girl returned to the library. She did not know why she did so. In truth she scarcely knew she was going there until she found herself sitting before that same table at which she and the woman had sat a little while before. For a long time she sat there with her head in her hands, her tears falling upon a pad of yellow paper on the table before her.

Finally she dried her eyes, opened her purse, and counted her money. In some way it seemed that out of her great desire, out of her great new need, there must be more than she had thought. But there was not, and she folded her hands upon the two five-dollar bills and the one silver dollar and looked with an utter hopelessness about the big room.

She had forgotten her own disappointments, her own loneliness. She was oblivious to everything in the world now save what seemed the absolute necessity of getting the woman back to the mountains while she yet had eyes to see them.

But what could she do? Again she counted the money. She could make herself, someway or other, get along without one of the five-dollar bills, but five dollars would not take one very close to the mountains. And then she saw a man standing before the Denver paper, and she saw that another man was waiting to take his place. The one who was reading had a dinner pail in his hand. The clothes of the other told that he, too, was of the world's workers. The man before the paper wore a look which told plainly that to him it was the paper from home. And the one who was waiting had an eagerness, a certain expectancy, in his bearing.

The idea came upon her with such suddenness, sprang upon her so full born, so perfect in every detail, that it made her gasp. They — the people who came to read the Denver paper, the people who loved the mountains and yet were far from them, the people who were themselves homesick and full of longing — were the people to understand.

It took her but a minute to act. She put the silver dollar and one five-dollar bill back in her purse. She clutched the other bill

in her left hand, picked up a pencil, and began to write. She headed the petition: "To all who know and love the mountains," and she told the story with the simpleness of one speaking from the heart, and the directness of one speaking to those sure to understand. "And so I found her here by the Denver paper," she said, after she had stated the tragic facts, "because it was the closest she could come to the mountains. Her heart is not breaking because she is going blind. It is breaking because she may never again look with seeing eyes upon those great hills which rise up about her home. We must do it for her simply because we would wish that, under like circumstances, some one do it for us. She belongs to us because we understand.

"If you can only give fifty cents, please do not hold it back because it seems but little. Fifty cents will take her seventeen miles nearer home — seventeen miles closer to the things upon which she longs that her last seeing glance may fall."

After she had written it she rose, and, the five-dollar bill in one hand, the sheets of yellow paper in the other, walked down the long room to the desk at which one of the librarians sat. The girl's cheeks were very red, her eyes shining with excitement, as with a hot eloquence she poured out the story. They mingled their tears of sympathy together, for the girl at the desk was herself young and far from home, and then they walked back to the Denver paper, and pinned the sheets of yellow paper just above the file. At the bottom of the petition the librarian wrote: "Leave your money at the desk in this room. It will be properly attended to." The girl from Colorado then turned over her five-dollar bill and passed out into the gathering night.

Her heart was brimming with joy. "I can get a cheaper boarding place," she told herself, stepping jauntily along through the puddles of water, "and until something else turns up I can get a place in a store."

One by one they had gathered while the woman was telling the story. "And so, if you don't mind," she said, in conclusion, "I'd like to have you put in a little piece that I got to Denver safe, so's they can all see it. They was all so worked up about when I'd get here. Would that cost much?" she asked, timidly.